

## SUMMARY

The authors whose texts have been included in the present volume of the *Ethos* are exploring the phenomenon of the information society with special attention paid to the problem of the actual position and situation of the human person in this new social form. The primary question that the authors are considering is whether the advent of the information society is bound to involve elaboration of a new anthropological conception of the human person and consequently a new ethics.

The authors of the text *From the Editors* compare the impact of the Newtonian revolution with that of the latest revolution in the sphere of information and communication technology, pointing out that the challenge of the information society lies in the fact that this new social form has caused the universal moral problems to acquire a new and frequently unclear shape. Thus a special effort is needed to identify "the new versions of the old problems" in order to be able to apply the already existing moral norms to the new realms that have started to appear.

In his Message for the 24th World Communications Day the Holy Father John Paul II points that the progress of technology that was to transform the face of the earth had already been foreseen by the Council Fathers, who recognized that developments in communications technology were likely to set off chain reactions with unforeseen consequences. They insisted that the Church be in the very midst of human progress, sharing the experiences of the rest of humanity, seeking to understand them and to interpret them in the light of faith. The Council Fathers also stressed that the task of the faithful was to make creative use of the new discoveries and technologies for the benefit of humanity and the fulfillment of God's plan for the world. John Paul II observes that today no one sees social communications as mere instruments or technologies. They are now seen as part of a still unfolding culture whose full implications are as yet imperfectly understood and whose potentialities remain for the moment only partly exploited. Among these possibilities are real dialogue between widely-separated peoples, a worldwide sharing of ideas and aspirations, growth in mutual knowledge and understanding, and a strengthening of brotherhood across many hitherto insurmountable barriers. With the advent of computer telecommunications and what are known as computer participation systems, the Church is offered further means for fulfilling her mission. Methods of facilitating communication and dialogue among her own members can strengthen the bonds of unity between them, while immediate access to information makes it possible for her to deepen her dialogue with the contemporary world. In the new "computer culture" the Church can more readily inform the world of her beliefs and explain the reasons for her stance on any given issue or event. She can hear more clearly the voice of public opinion, and enter into a continuous discussion with the world, thus involving herself more immediately in the common search for solutions to humanity's many pressing problems. Yet the Church must not forget that her most vital and urgent message has to do with knowledge of Christ and the way of salvation

which he offers. This is something she must put before the people of every age, recognizing the wisdom that God has spoken to humanity according to the culture proper to each age. Surely we must be grateful for the new technology which enables us to store information in vast man-made artificial memories, thus providing wide and instant access to the knowledge which is our human heritage. Young people especially are readily adapting to the computer culture and its "language," which is surely a cause for satisfaction. They have had the advantage of growing up with the new developments, and it will be their duty to employ these new instruments for a wider and more intense dialogue among all the diverse races and classes who share the "shrinking globe". It falls to them to search out ways in which the new systems of data conservation and exchange can be used to assist in promoting greater universal justice, greater respect for human rights, a healthy development for all individuals and peoples, and the freedoms essential for a fully human life. Let us rise to the challenge of new discoveries and technologies by bringing to them a moral vision rooted in our religious faith, in our respect for the human person, and our commitment to transform the world in accordance with God's plan. Thus we will use the potential of the "computer age" to serve man's human and transcendent calling, and thus to give glory to the Father from whom all good things come.

The first section is entitled *The Human Person – the Subject of Communication* and it includes a number of articles regarding philosophical and theological anthropology. The purpose of this survey is to recall the anthropological reality of the human person that is the prism through which to approach the information society.

Mieczysław A. Krąpiec, OP, presents a historical perspective of the controversy over the philosophical understanding of the human being, in a particular way pointing to the revolution in the understanding of being itself brought about by Thomas Aquinas. The ontological structure of the human being is such that the first experience of the existential act is concurrent with the act of recognition of the world. The human being aims not only at an internalization of the world, but also at establishing contact with other human beings in an act of love, which identifies him or her as a person. Human beings actualize their personhood in decisional acts, many of which concern participation in various social realities, such as the family or the nation, that are the roots of cultural identity. A human community shows itself as a necessary factor in resolving rightful personal decisions, and as such it should serve the development of the faculties involved in the decision taking process, that is the intellect and the will, as well as the virtues – habitual dispositions towards good actions. The new reality of the information society calls for a prudent application of the traditional virtues in new situations. One must bear in mind the fact that in the case of a child the first cognitive contact with others is based on trust: the information acquired from others is assumed to be true and reliable. Although in the case of an adult person the information coming from others is checked and filtered, much of it is still received as trustworthy – it is impossible to check all the incoming information. This natural attitude of cognitive trust expresses the nature of how a human person approaches others on the pre-reflective level. The cognitive trust manifests the hope that what one receives from others is goodness. Any society worth building should respect the natural cognitive trust inherent in the human being. A threat to cognitive trust lies in overstressing the pragmatic function of the language in the process of communication and in ignoring its semantic function that embraces the relationships between the language and the world. Attention must be paid to the fact that the newly established ways of using the language impose new senses on it. Therefore, what the present day information society needs above all is new particularizations of the virtue of prudence within the domain of communication.

Jarosław Merecki, SDS, brings up the fact that the context in which the concept of the person was shaped had been originally provided by the ancient Greek theatre and by the ancient theological debate over the Holy Trinity. The modern conception of the human person advanced by Robert Spaemann grows out of this tradition. According to Spaemann, the uniqueness of the human persons lies in their non-identity with their nature, as well as in the fact that the person

always stands in various relationships to other persons. The specifically relational character of the human person is most genuinely revealed in the ancient tragedy *Antigone* by Sophocles: it is through various interpersonal relationships that Antigone learns about her calling and comes to her self-understanding. The relational character of the human person is demonstrated still more vividly in the Christian teaching on the Holy Trinity. The essence of the inner life of the Holy Trinity lies in a continuous mutual self-giving occurring between the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. An echo of this divine reality is found in human love, in which the persons identify themselves with each other to such an extent that they cannot imagine their lives without the other. In such cases the psychological experience expresses a deep ontological bond. Spaemann stresses that a human person can fully exist only in a community of persons. The fact is that the human person gains his or her identity as a person by virtue of the acknowledgement received from others, this acknowledgement being the only rightful response to what a person in his or her essence is. Moreover, human communication enables the development of a person's inner potentialities. As opposed to Th. Hobbes, Spaemann holds that the human person is capable of perceiving the reality from a point of view that does not involve his or her immediate welfare: the person is able to pose the question about the truthfulness of things in expectation that what he or she perceives as objective truth will be acknowledged by the independent reality. The primary relationship obtaining between human persons is not the one of hostility: the human person born into a friendly environment of the family naturally receives acknowledgement, the person is loved by virtue of the fact that he or she is. To be alive means to remain in kind communication with other persons. As it is recognition of truth that enables the person's fulfillment, the value of truthfulness acquires the fundamental significance in the process of communication. Consequently, any form of communication that excludes this value will necessarily lead to manipulation, which is destructive to the human community. This is the basic truth to be remembered in the information society.

Fr. Czesław Bartnik describes four typical approaches to the human person that can be distinguished in the history of ideas: the theatrological one, the metaphysical one, the one based on the concept of the self and the subject, and finally the personalistic one, which is capable of explaining a certain two-sidedness of the human being, namely, the fact that the human being can appear either as a subject or as an object, either as a being or as a self, either as a material being or as a spiritual one, either as an individual being or as a social one, either as a being that is immanent or as one that is transcendent, either as a finite being or as an infinite one. In order to develop the kind of personalism that will succeed in reconciling these apparent opposites in the human being one must abandon the conception of the human person as a substance as well as the view that a relation merely adds to the substance. Instead, one should rather adopt the concept of the person as a substantial relation (or a relational substance). Indeed, the theological interpretation of the Holy Trinity points to the identity of the substance and the relation, based on the identity of their nature. In the light of this approach one can say that the human person also appears to be both a substance and a relation. Such an approach excludes both collectivism and individualism as a social theory to be adopted: neither does a person exist without other persons, nor does the community exist without persons. The conception of the person as a substantial relation calls for the construction of a broad and dynamic social system which will enhance the fact of the personal character of a human community, the fact of the community as a quasi-person, as a community of persons that results from their correlationality based on their nature. The present approaches to the human person tend to fall into reductionism by identifying the person with the person's intellect. A particularly reductionist misinterpretation of the human person, both in the individual and in the social dimension, appears as a result of an erroneous recognition that the person is fully a product of information. Only the ontological approach is capable of demonstrating that the person transcends information itself towards the truthful information about the reality, that the person transcends purely biological life, spiritualizes the matter and is able to transcend the created order towards God.

Kazimierz Krajewski points out that the distinctive features of the information society are broad access to information and people's actual participation in information systems. In such a society information is perceived as the basic good and constitutes the decisive factor of social progress. Yet it is the human person that remains at the foundation of any human community. Therefore, in order to evaluate the influence that the human person is subject to in an information society, it is necessary to analyze the process of the constitution of personal subjectivity which springs from cognitive activity. Cognitive acts appear as the ways to grasp the form of things. Yet acts of judgmental cognition, in particular the moments of assertion inherent in them, are specific to the human person, as the information gained in a cognitive act concerns not only the act itself, but also its subject. One can say that in a cognitive act the informative element is intermingled with the normative one, which is best revealed in situations when the subject is challenged to question the recognized truth: the subject then discovers him- or herself as dependent on, in a way conditioned by, the recognized truth. He or she experiences that to question the grasped truth would mean to question him- or herself. Thus human persons as cognitive subjects are at the same time witnesses to the reality that is the object of their cognition. From this viewpoint human life shows itself as a constant trial of living in truth. An analysis of the human cognitive act demonstrates that in the case of human cognition freedom is involved already on the pre-reflexive level, which points to the moral dimension of human cognition and at the same time to the human dignity that is manifested in the subject's recognition of the duty to show respect to the grasped truth in an act of free and independent choice. As a bearer of such an ontological structure the human person remains open to other people, and the experience of others in interpersonal and social communities is the source of truly human fulfillment. The experience of the other person is always founded on the experience of the other's body through which the person's subjectivity, his or her witness to truth and dignity, are revealed. A human person is thus cognitively given as a non-utilitarian good which deserves affirmation for his or her own sake and which must never be used as a means, but always treated as an end. The experience of the other person is an opportunity to participate in that person's humanity, which reveals the communitarian nature of the human cognitive (and moral) subject. As modern information technologies have an impact on our recognition of the world, on our self-perception and on the interpersonal relationships, the question appears of whether the information society of the present day will ensure proper conditions for the growth of a personal subjectivity, and of whether it will enhance a genuinely human encounter between persons, thus contributing to the human fulfillment. The main problem lies in the fact that within the sphere of virtual reality a being becomes reduced to images and words. The cyberspace is a substitute of the reality, a mediated reality enabling at most mediated communication, which, ontologically, is barely initiation of any direct cognition. In the virtual reality the net user does not relate to objective truth, but rather to the available information. Thus the notion of truth that can be employed in cyberspace pertains merely to the coherence of the information that has been accessed. The subject remains closed within the immanence of information. Instead of its truthfulness, the primary values in the world of information technology are availability of information, immediacy in accessing it and the speed of its transmission. Also human relationships in the cyberspace are of virtual nature and as such they lack the real presence of the other and they do not enable direct cognition of the other self. Thus they are only substitutes of personal contact and they do not enable recognition of genuine (transcendent) human subjectivity or participation in the humanity of others. An integral encounter of human persons can take place only through the recognition of a person's body. Therefore a presence on the net is merely a quasi-presence. Although one can say that information technology offers new opportunities for human subjectivity and for participation, it simultaneously poses a threat to the nature of human subjectivity and to the participation it fosters.

The succeeding section, in which the authors endeavour to explore the nature of the information society as a new social form, is entitled *What Is an Information Society?*

Marcin Koszowy delves into the topic of information itself. Information is considered as material to be processed, multiplied and transmitted. Due to the mass character of information in the present age, consideration is needed of how to introduce order in the process of information transmission. This in turn requires addressing questions of ontological, epistemological and axiological nature. A careful investigation of such questions leads to the conclusion that – as opposed to the prevalent view – access to information, regardless of the adopted definition of information, should not be unlimited. On the contrary, in order to avoid so-called information garbage, access to information must be selective. The selection in question, however, is not to be an effect of censorship or social control. Instead, it should result from an enhanced awareness of those who transmit information, as well as of those who receive it. As a result, the transmitted information will not be chaotic, but systematic and it will correspond to the inherently human desire for truth. The process of information reconstruction should be divided into stages. In the presented model, firstly, information is acquired from data and used as material in order to build up knowledge by way of identifying true and valid propositions. Then knowledge is transformed into wisdom. As mere information does not yet mark wisdom, special attention must be paid to the selection of information to transmit, to its exactness, clarity and correspondence to the actual state of affairs.

Krystyna Górniak-Kocikowska presents some chosen aspects of the process referred to as the shaping of an information society. Some light on the process in question can be shed by an analysis of the names proposed for the new social form that has emerged during the last few decades. Indeed, the efforts to find an adequate description of the new (global) society reflect the philosophical and social questions that are bound to arise or which have already arisen as a result of the multidimensional changes triggered off by the revolution in the domain of information and communication technology. Attempts at naming the new society reflect the gist of the debate on what constitutes the essence of the changes that have caused an essential transformation of the society, making its existing name is no longer adequate. The names that have been proposed so far include: “a computer society,” “an information society,” “a communication society,” “an information and communication society” and “a network community.” Each of these names points to some chosen characteristic of the information society that is to be considered as fundamental. The background of the debate on the name for the new society is the social reception and interpretation of the essence and significance of the computer revolution which has entered all spheres of human life due to the advancement and omnipresence of information and communication technology. Thus the debate over the adequate name for the emerging society is useful in understanding many important processes at work in a (civil, democratic) society.

Tomasz Goban-Klas explores the origins of the mass society in the 20th century, as well as its evolution into the present day mediated society. The advent of the phenomenon of an information society, resulting from a rapid development of all spheres of life based on the advancement of the information and telecommunication sector, was anticipated already in the 1960's. The network society based on access to the Internet was only a logical continuation of the impact of the inventions that revolutionized the sphere of information processing and transmission. The Internet is part of the media whose essence is information transmission with the primary purpose of communication, in this case mediated one. The present social form can be called a mediated society or a mixture of an information society and a network society. The most significant mark of a mediated society is that its predominant form of social contact, instead of being direct, becomes mediated. The media in this social form contribute to the creation of a virtual reality, while the infrastructure remains the basis of information transmission and reception, almost all human actions are assisted by media and telecommunication forms, and mediated cultures or industries constitute a significant element of the economy and affect the employment strategy. The mediated society has produced the mediated personality, an entire generation of people referred to as “screeny,” to whom an image is as valid as a text message. The media are frequently called the fourth estate and access to them is treated as a human right. Since the mediated society generates

numerous social problems, such as a growing generation gap accompanied by the dangerous phenomenon of social exclusion that affects computer illiterate individuals, the postulate must be made that the high-tech of today be accompanied by the so-called high-touch. The challenge for the mediated society at the threshold of a new millennium is thus to regain control over the media, to abandon approaching them merely from the point of view of marketing or technology, and to give them humane and civic a face. Indeed, the essence of this challenge is to overcome the paradox of an allegedly invincible mediatization of the world society and the fragility that lies at its heart.

The authors of the articles included in following section, entitled *The Information Society – an Invitation to Participation*, consider such issues as the position and actual opportunities of an individual in the information society and they debate whether an information society creates possibilities for the growth of the person or rather threats to this growth and its limitations.

Maciej Howiecki holds that, paradoxically, the information society is an easy object of manipulation. The potential for manipulation is created by the possibility of such construction of the transmitted message that will result in the conclusions desired by the broadcaster. Such practices are tantamount to jeopardizing the principles of social communication which remains the basis of any social community or any social contract that involves recognition of mutual duties and responsibility for breaking them. The rules of trustworthy public communication are: respect for truth, tolerance for the convictions of others, rejection of violence or aggression and recognition of the common, indisputable values. However, the reality of present day public communication rules is quite the opposite. Modern media, which preach the relativity of truth, employ "hidden persuasion" in exercising their potential to influence individual choices and preferences so as to make individuals change their views and attitudes, and thus follow the intentions of the manipulators. Moreover, modern telecommunication technologies entail certain ways of using them, thus the implications of technological advances in the sphere of the media are not solely dependent on our intentions. In the modern society, the fundamental aim of social communication, namely, the growth of the human person and progress of human communities, has been abandoned for the sake of profit and political interests. Human dependence on the media frequently results in personality distortion. The forms of manipulation most frequently applied by the media include: abuse of the public opinion, destruction of the hierarchy of values and of the authorities, instrumental approach to the presented expert opinions, recourse to emotions, the terror of political correctness, the terror of entertainment, the terror of debates, and the status of information as that of an idol (despite its arbitrary selection). A specifically negative mark of modern information process is that it does not respect traditional taboos, while the taboo in the Western culture has always been employed in order to guard human dignity. Generally, one can say that in the modern society freedom of word is not accompanied by the responsibility for the word.

Krzysztof Murawski uses the example of Poland in order to consider the topic of human freedom in the information society. The task that the Polish society faces is that of building a modern information society so as to use its enormous potential of growth. The core of this task is to identify and cross the existing barriers to the development. The forty five years long communist rule in Poland resulted in extreme backwardness of our country in many areas of social and economic life. Despite the growth of education the progress in the field of economy is slow and the economic solutions that are employed frequently go in the direction that is contrary to the desired one, resulting in such phenomena as reduction of the number of private companies, a growing unemployment level, growing corruption, corrupted yet omnipotent public administration, reforms introduced to benefit particular social groups at the cost of others. These negative phenomena must be overcome if Poland is to embrace a modern information society. Another aspect that must not be neglected on the way to social growth is that of culture. It is here that a great task for the Church unfolds: she must support the educational initiatives that enhance growth and form open and decided attitudes. In the modern society freedom can be exercised in active participation in the

social life through which one can satisfy one's deepest need for truth and for a meaningful life. The success of the attempt to build a new society in Poland depends not only on particular social factors, but also on the predominance of high values over the short term ones. The truth that must be remembered throughout this process is that social growth is a result of creating such opportunities of getting better off for individuals as well as for communities that will not involve a necessity to abandon one's ideals.

While considering the issue of human communication in the information society Bp. Marek Jędraszewski refers to Karol Wojtyła's anthropological study *The Acting Person*, as well as to the output of the twentieth century personalists, in order to contrast the attitude of social solidarity with the exclusivism of the information society, where access to information and information itself have replaced the capital and resources in power games. The information society, despite its global character, introduces new forms of social stratification. Yet, as any human community, it is based on the understanding of the human nature and as such it must adopt the attitude of social solidarity, as well as make every effort so that the relationships between persons in it will be those of encounter and dialogue. The present reality of the information society is far from this vision and the greatest difficulty lies in the impossibility to define the common good of all its members. This is accompanied by the phenomenon of dissolution of traditional human communities, such as the family. A certain fragmentation of encounter can be observed, contrary to the social attitude of participation and integration. Modern society has largely abandoned the personalistic value of the human action in the sense proposed by Wojtyła. Therefore, the fascination with the information society must be accompanied by the attitude of *caritas*, as Gabriel Marcel understood it, a habitual disposition to openness to others. An information society has been offered an opportunity to become a society of genuine human encounter and a community of persons. Yet it will require a strong will and a deep effort on the part of its members to transcend the present moment in the name of the challenge of the truth of the common good that provides the foundation of participation.

Paweł Kawalec observes that in a majority of analyses the information society is seen in the perspective of the challenges and threats brought about by information systems, and thus it is either perceived in terms of technological determinism (with its danger of social exclusion, totalitarianism and individualism) or ascribed an almost eschatological role. Instead of such extreme standpoints, a rational appreciation of the impact of the current changes is needed. A possibility of such an approach is offered by philosophical anthropology, in particular by the anthropological analyses of the human nature made by Karol Wojtyła in his work *The Acting Person*. Wojtyła holds that any form of genuinely human community should be based on the attitude of participation on the part of its members. Participation is understood by him as an ability, inherent in the human nature, to find personal fulfillment by way of undertaking action together with others. Participation involves a constant dynamism between the attitude of solidarity and opposition. Wojtyła's analyses of the structure of a human community point out that adopting the view of technological determinism and ascribing independence to the technological processes is ungrounded in its nature. A philosophical analysis of the category of participation demonstrates that it is ultimately man who determines the direction of the technological advancement, as well as the ways in which its effects are implemented into the social world. Indeed, in today's world one can point to numerous instances in which the challenge of participation has been taken in a constructive way (e.g. in countries such as Finland, Ireland, Singapore, Egypt). As these examples have demonstrated, implementing new information technologies can become a chance to develop new forms of cooperation whenever it involves consideration of the actual, yet occasionally unconscious or even unexpressed needs of the members of a given community. Otherwise the process in question results in a growing dependence of some individuals on others. Therefore one can say that the challenge of the information society can be met only on condition that there is a correlation and interdependence between the action taken in order to implement the new technologies and the effort taken by the members of a given community in order to realize their common good.

The authors of the articles included in the subsequent section, entitled *Culture in the Information Age*, analyze the faces that culture is anticipated to assume in the information society, as well the impact of the modern mediated society on the traditional culture and art.

Kazimierz Krzysztofek presents an analysis of three hypothetical scenarios of social life in the computer age. The one referred to as *Matrix* is a warning against the growing technicization of human life which might result in absolute dependence of humans on the new technological advances and scientific discoveries. In the world of *Matrix* survival would be conditioned scientifically, while communication would be reduced to interaction between man and machine. Life in the virtual reality and the impact of artificial intelligence would cause a growing depersonalization of life, accompanied by the alienation of the human person. The second scenario, called *Bonne société*, is optimistic in its nature and it underscores the extraordinary chances of development both for the societies that are already technologically advanced and for those that have stayed behind. This scenario expresses an optimistic attitude: a trust in human culture and in its progress, as well as the belief that information technology will enable a return to spontaneous communication, which will in turn result in the advent of a new communication community characterized by intersubjectivity and collective intelligence. In the world shared by such a community, the world would no longer be dominated by hierarchical and market institutions. Instead, it would be united by the Net: in this vision, the global civic society will exert control over business and the structures of power. According to the third scenario, called *Déjà vu*, the new technologies will bring about certain changes in the social life, but on the other hand they will strengthen the existing social, economic and cultural system. Despite the innovations of technological nature, human life will remain unchanged, as inventions and novelties are not in power to break the cultural continuity, which is rather subject to evolution. However, which of the three models in question will ultimately predominate in the coming years is impossible to foresee.

Maciej Rajewski presents an analysis of the reception of the mass media by three primal societies: the Navajo Indians in North America, the Kayapo Indians in Brazil and the Aborigines in Australia. While participating in the anthropological project "The Navajo Film Themselves" the Navajos proved that film making had its cultural rootedness. The films they made reflected their perception of nature as an entity composed of classes of being in motion, the basis of this vision being the language categories of the Navajo, who tended to present people in motion and introduce leaps in action that were unexplainable or illogical from the point of view of a European mind. A similar yet broader project was carried out among the Kayapo Indians. While the Navajos concentrated on the film as a cultural artifact, the Kayapo deliberately used the video technology, which they had not known before the start of the project, for the purpose of pursuing their political and social objectives. Thus the Kayapo used modern media technologies in order to strengthen their own cultural identity and to promote their image as well as their political and economic interests among cultures different from their own. Australian Aborigines in turn incorporated the video technology and television into the process of transmission of their cultural heritage to younger generations, as well as into promotion of their culture.

Marcin Pastwa analyzes the trends in the new aesthetics of the media as well as the presence of electronic and digital images in art in order to trace the mechanisms that have made it possible for traditional art to enrich or broaden its capabilities. Modern art is not easy to define, as the borders between the world of art and the sphere of everyday life have been smudged. Nowadays the dominant tendency is to fuse the real and fictional, which leads to aestheticization of everyday life. In order to describe the ongoing changes, notions such as acceleration, mobility, eclecticism, hybridization, individuation, globalization or virtualization are employed, yet they turn out insufficient to grasp the essence of the present turn which lies in the fact that traditional art's reference to reality and meaning has been replaced with the reference to the technical machinery that enables image creation. Thus what can be observed in art is a gradual disappearance of the reality whose place is being taken by a multisensory hyperreality that ultimately questions any system of



reference. As a result, the sphere of meaning is replaced with emptiness and nothingness. A certain paradox can be observed: the continuous influx of information, its processing and multiplication make the information itself unstable, and therefore the message it is to transmit loses credibility. Indeed, modern art has lost the distinction between the being and the phenomenon. One of the current debates in the field of modern aesthetics concerns the question whether electronic images represent creation (and so are results of the artist's sovereignty) or are merely reproduction (through simulation). Modern artists favour deconstructionism, which ultimately aims at deconstructing both cultural and individual identity and concentrates on the purely pictorial value of particular artistic creations. A controversial theme in modern art is that of transcending the barriers of the body and expression imposed by external conventional perception. In their wish to catch up with life artists employ still more perfect simulation and they often dangerously approach the border between art making and creation.

Paweł Łupkowski considers the state of research on artificial intelligence in order to stress that this area remains an important field of consideration for ethics and anthropology, as it relates to questions that are crucial to both these disciplines, namely, the scope of the responsibility of the scientists who deal with artificial intelligence (the problem to what extent man can exercise his creative power, as well as that of whether the effects achieved in the field of creating artificial intelligence affect man's image of himself and of the surrounding world), the issue whether technology is good or bad as such and whether it should be feared or looked at with optimism, the question of the future status of thinking machines and the range of their possible rights. The central issue, however, is that of predicting the consequences of the research in question and of developing ethical discourse so that an awareness of a new class of problems should be raised and a moral vacuum avoided.

The following section, entitled *Does the Information Society Need a New Ethics?*, is devoted to the problem of whether the new information society is in need of a special ethics. A positive answer to this question implies that traditional ethics is insufficient in dealing with the problems faced by humanity in the information age.

Agnieszka Lekka-Kowalik and Rafał Lizut analyze some chosen guidelines of building an information society. The authors of such programs use the term "information society" both in the descriptive and normative sense, while referring to a certain social form whose realization is a moral and social duty. Building an information society is understood on the one hand as implementation of some technological infrastructure requiring legal and social adjustments, and on the other, as a political necessity and a moral imperative. The information society is seen as a better environment for an overall human growth. However, the authors of the proposed programs of building the information society fail to observe that the realization of the potential of this social form will depend on the recognition of truth as its axiological foundation, in particular on the recognition of the unchangeable and objective character of the human nature. Without the recognition of the normative dimension of the human nature, which provides the ultimate grounding of all the moral norms, even the economic benefits announced in the directives of building the information society will not be possible to attain. Thus, against the dominant intellectual fashion for cognitive relativism, the success of the information society will depend on a return in thought and in action to the theses advanced by classical ethics. In this sense, technology turns out to be an ally of classical philosophy and of the common sense which numerous modern thinkers have prematurely considered a relic.

Luciano Floridi argues that information ethics, seen as a macroethics that provides the conceptual foundation of computer ethics, is a valid philosophical discipline. Traditional ethical theories, e.g. consequentialism, contractualism and deontologism, have turned out to be unable to accommodate some of the new and significant problems typically discussed in computer ethics. However, an interesting perspective on how to treat the moral problems encountered in the information age is offered by an allocentric information ethics, centred on the patient of the action.

It is within the framework of this information ethics that computer ethics can develop its analyses, and attempt to indicate the best course of action, as a consequence of the steady and careful attention paid to what happens to the information environment, i.e. the "infosphere". By expanding environmentalist concerns, information ethics does not simply qualify actions as good or bad in themselves, but insofar as they essentially refer to what is eventually better or worse for the whole infosphere. Therefore, information ethics is primarily an ethics of being rather than an ethics of conduct or of becoming, and hence it qualifies as a non-standard ethics. The fundamental difference, which sets it apart from all other members of the same class of theories, is that information ethics raises informational entities as such, rather than just life in general, to the role of the true and universal patients of any action, thus presenting itself as an infocentric and object-oriented, rather than just a biocentric and patient-oriented ethics. Without information there is no moral action, but information now moves from being a necessary, semantic prerequisite for any morally responsible action to being, ontologically, its primary object. The crucial importance of this radical change in perspective cannot be overestimated. From an information ethics (object-oriented and ontocentric theory) perspective, the ethical discourse now comes to concern any entity (understood informationally) as such, that is not just all persons, their cultivation, well-being and social interactions, not just animals, plants and their proper natural life, but also anything that exists, from paintings and books to stars and stones; anything that may or will exist, like future generations; and anything that was but is no more, like our ancestors. The ontological equality principle means that any form of reality (any instance of information), simply for the fact of being what it is, enjoys a minimal (possibly overridable) right to exist and develop in a way which is appropriate to its nature.

Barbara Chyrowicz, SSpS, argues in turn against the spread of professional ethics, including computer ethics. The fashion for creating applied ethics started in the second half of the twentieth century, and among its most immediate causes were advances in the domain of science and information technology, as well as the ambivalence of the discoveries made in those fields. Ethics has stopped being a merely academic discipline as it is badly needed in solving dramatic problems of everyday life. Also the origination of computer ethics as a new kind of applied ethics can be justified by the empirical context that has brought new and so far unknown moral challenges. Yet many authors who deal with computer ethics (e.g. N. Wiener, D. Parker, J. H. Moor, D. Johnson, T. W. Bynum and D. Gotterbarn) still inquire into what computer ethics really is. As a matter of fact, the problem of the growing responsibility caused by the far reaching effects of human actions is not a new one in ethics. What ethicists need above all is a clear demarcation line between the technological problems and the moral ones. However, essentially there is no difference between the principle of responsibility held in the ethics the modern authors advance and the norm of responsibility that has been present in ethics since the ancient times. In relation to the moral appreciation of the future effects of technological advancement one can say that prudence is needed. Ethicists are facing the danger of a casuistic approach unless computer ethics is developed as part of a broad philosophical system. Being a code rather than an ethics, it cannot be seen as an independent field of moral reflection. One must not forget that ethics, although it used to be called practical philosophy, is theoretical reflection above all, and that it seeks for arguments and aims rather at discovering the moral order than at inventing it.

The next section bears the title *New Challenges – New Threats* and it comprises articles whose authors analyze the challenges that modern communication must meet in order to retain its personalistic value.

Jerzy Goćkowski and Katarzyna M. Machowska distinguish two models of the wrongful attitude to information transmission, as well as two forms of depersonalization which result from the adoption of these respective models in the social life. In general terms, a wrongful attitude to information transmission can be described as inevitably involving such mechanisms as recourse to deceit, intermingling descriptive and evaluative language, as well as an emphasis on its functional

aspect. Employment of these mechanisms results in the degradation of mass culture, in a moral and intellectual decline of the institutions responsible for information transmission as well as in the violation of freedom and ultimately in the violation of the substantial rationality of the society, which demonstrates a lack of responsibility for the transmitted information, and whose members tend to prefer stereotypes and myths to analysis and interpretation. These characteristics were particularly well visible in communism and in nazism. Thus the first of the analyzed models embraces mass information in a totalitarian democracy, where information is subordinated to the mental shaping of human beings, according to an adopted design. In a totalitarian democracy the spread of information is subject to absolute control exerted by the ruling party: informing citizens it is no longer an autonomous activity. The ones responsible for the spread of information demonstrate merely a rationality of coherence, as their primary task is that of strengthening the totalitarian regime. The basic rules of the spread of information in such a system are those of censorship and engineering the transmitted information by way of selection, emphasis and guided interpretation. The second analyzed model concerns the attitude to information in a pluralist mass democracy where numerous sources of information and media are competing with each other in the process of acquiring, storing and transmitting information. This growing competition, as well as the emergence of professions connected with information processing, lead to a shift of emphasis which is now being put on the fastness of information transmission rather than on its quality. Another problem that arises in a pluralist mass democracy is that the vast influx of information impedes its selection, which, paradoxically, results in an overall lowering of its quality standard and in turn negatively affects the intellectual level of the public. Thus the society of a pluralist mass democracy transforms into a community of individuals whose freedom of choice is merely apparent and who are actually prepared neither for building a civil society nor for participation in the democratic procedures. A society of events that is a result of the immediacy of communication is not interested in transforming information into knowledge. Also the growing specialization results in a decline of integral culture: particular individuals work within still narrower intellectual fields and gradually lose touch with other areas, and so the ability to a general interpretation of the universe. Thus a new pattern of everyman in modern democratic culture is created.

Marek Hetmański and Małgorzata Marzewska present an analysis of how the process of telecommunication affects human personality. According to a traditional conviction, communication, which is defined as the process of entering a social relationship by way of information exchange mediated by signs, enables the existence of a community and shapes the personality of its members. Yet in the case of remote communication it appears that the ways and means of communication activities exert a much stronger influence, in particular by determining the subject's own perception of his or her personal identity. Furthermore, computer technologies largely contribute to the creation of particular cognitive attitudes as well as to the feelings experienced by their users. In an information society self-consciousness and self-recognition are frequently results of communication, seen according to its adopted model. The Internet appears to be the realm of confrontation between technology and the human sense of identity. This confrontation assumes a particular form of suspension of the difference between the real and the virtual. In this sense the Internet is a laboratory where one constructs and deconstructs one's self. Human identity appears then to be a patchwork, a dynamic, negotiable entity. In the virtual reality the *homo communicans* has in a way reached the limit of self-identification. Yet although communication and contact have been largely facilitated in the information age, they do not enhance creation of personal identity. Human contact characteristic of the information age, although facilitated, is not deep enough and therefore it frequently remains anonymous, impersonal, and open to manipulation.

Fr. Janusz Nagórny explores the ways in which information society can threaten the integrity of the human person. This question is not necessarily an expression of the negative attitude to the present cultural and social transformations, but rather a manifestation of prudence. A reference to an integral conception of the human person is of primary importance in this context. While most

descriptions and definitions of the information society are centred on the social implications of the advancement in the field of information and computer technology, attention is rarely paid to those aspects of the social transformations in question which concern directly the human being and the human being's integral development. Similarly, reference to the objective moral order which guards the full truth about the human person is frequently disregarded in the analyses of the new information society. On the other hand, the welfare of the citizens is not always identified with the good of the persons, while forms of governing information transmission are usually seen as the forms of governing the society. However, the crucial question to be answered is how the new information technologies affect human attitudes and how they influence the perception of the sense of human life. A moral analysis shows numerous challenges that must be faced by the members of an information society, among them elimination of social exclusion, preserving the conviction that information is valid insofar as it is true, as well as preserving the objective axiological order. In this context, the Catholic Church emphasizes that social communication should first of all call for truth both in social and individual life, retain its personalistic basis, and serve the welfare of the community. Members of the information society should be aware of the difference between direct human communication and mere information transmission, as well as of the fact that access to information is not necessarily access to truth. The task of the media is to serve the human dignity and human growth. Therefore it is the duty of the members of an information society to take proper care of the spiritual and religious dimensions of the human person and thus retain the primacy of ethics over technology, which means, among others, excluding the approach in which information is treated as a mere commodity, as well as rejecting every form of manipulation. The information society, if built on the foundation of truth, can become a source of the civilization of life.

Piotr T. Nowakowski considers the problem whether the media, in particular the Internet, can play an integrating role in human communities. This question is of prime importance in relation to the basic social unit, namely, the family. Although the Internet is often perceived as conducive to the development of social life, one must not fail to see the fact that the communities it creates comprise anonymous individuals rather than persons who enter direct contact with each other. Moreover, prolonged exposition of family members to the Internet may well demonstrate the destructive power of this medium and negatively affect the functioning of the family by causing its atomization. From the psychological viewpoint, however, it should be noted that the media can be properly integrated in family life and their potential used for the sake of the welfare of the family. Used prudently, the media can strengthen the family bond while they serve to integrate human emotions and to cause genuine interaction between family members. In this light, one of the basic needs of the information society is that of proper education towards active media usage.

The succeeding section is entitled *Evangelization of the Information Society* and it includes articles on the prospects of evangelization in the computer age.

Fr. Andrzej Draguła refers to Marshal McLuhan's analysis of the impact of the media on human individuals and on social life. Throughout history, each new medium: the phonetic alphabet, print, radio and television, has introduced deep changes in the human life and contributed to a permanent transformation of the human environment. Nowadays it is the electronic media that have started to shape human consciousness and social life. Thus we are witnessing the dusk of the civilization borne by the alphabet and print, as well as the simultaneous advent of the dominance of the icon over the word. On the one hand, a crisis of the word can be observed, yet on the other hand electronic media offer a chance of regaining the social unity lost in the age of mechanical civilization. One can say that in the present age the tribal village is replaced by the global one. The task of the Church in this particular cultural situation is to turn the global village into the global parish and to find her place in the world of electronic media. In fact, the electronic image, integrated with the electronically processed word, is a stronger ally of the religious faith than it is normally expected. As the Internet seems to favour a postmodernist form of religiousness which can be described as

believing without belonging, the task that the Church faces is to "baptize the Net." Processes such as globalization and mondialization, which are effects of the electronic revolution, can paradoxically contribute to the retrieval of the unity of today's atomized society. These processes appear to be close to the idea of universality characteristic of the Catholic Church, which by her nature transcends national communities. Unlike print and the culture of the Gutenberg era, electronic media favour communal creation and let us participate in religious rituals, thus strengthening our sense of belonging. Although it will not be easy, Christianity can find its chance of evangelization in the world of electronic media.

Bogdan Giemza, SDS, points out that the Catholic Church has already adopted the electronic media in her mission of evangelization, and the Apostolic See has announced a series of documents on the impact and use of the new media. These documents include John Paul II's Messages for the 24th, 35th and 26th World Communications Days, entitled respectively *The Christian Message in a Computer Culture*, *"Preach from the Houseltops": The Gospel in the Age of Global Communication*, and *Internet: A New Forum for Proclaiming the Gospel*, as well as the documents of the Pontifical Council for Social Communications. The teaching of the Church on the use of modern media of communication presented in those documents can be described as expressing an attitude of realism and confidence. The awareness of the threats and dilemmas that the Internet poses must not cause the absence of the Church from the world of the media. Moreover, proper use of the Internet may turn out helpful in a responsible exercise of freedom in a democratic state, in broadening educational and cultural horizons, and in personal development. Despite the glooming danger of the so-called digital divide the electronic revolution has also been the source of hope for positive transformations in the developing countries. Thus the Church does not perceive the Internet as a source of social problems, but rather as a chance for humanity, and above all as a chance of continuing her mission of evangelization. However, while appreciating the opportunities that the Internet creates for preaching the civilization of love, the Church must remain wary of the danger that may be a consequence of virtual evangelization. As the virtual reality apparently satisfies these human needs that are difficult to satisfy in real life, virtual evangelization may offer people an illusory sense of a religious community and at the same time separate them from the real Church community, thus opening the way to new forms of a quasi-Church community.

Fr. Tadeusz Zasepa presents an analysis of the present cultural situation. The fact that the world is subject to unceasing construction and reconstruction has made thinkers put forward numerous catastrophic visions of the future of humankind, in particular that of the identity crisis caused by meta-worlds constructed in the virtual world of computer networks. Yet philosophy can turn out helpful in overcoming this pessimism. Philosophers should investigate the virtual reality in the way cultural anthropologists conduct participating observation, and only then draw their conclusions. A significant question concerns the place of Christian anthropology in the information society. A metaphysical analysis shows that there is a fundamental difference between the world of human persons and that of other animate and inanimate beings. The phenomenon that defines the human person is the conscience, which tells the person how to remain free in truth. Theorists of the information society must not fail to observe the fact that the biological aspect of the human being cannot be considered in separation from the spiritual one. Otherwise they will easily fall into reductionism. The fundamental and inviolable value for any researcher responsible for developing new tools of human communication is human dignity which is grounded in the mystery of man. Researchers must not violate this mystery: they are not allowed to act for the sake of the welfare of the people if the people themselves have not expressed their consent to such action. In an information society, research problems must be always considered within the framework of integral humanism. If an information society wants to remain faithful to the human person, it must create the conditions that will be conducive to the growth of man's rational activity in the spheres that are the most important for culture, namely, the intellectual activity, the sphere of morals, the aesthetic and religious spheres. The main social concern in an information society is education of all its

citizens so that everyone is capable of using information networks. Such education should also develop critical thinking, self-possession and creativity, and as such it involves the contribution of various kinds of educators, not only that of computing teachers. Yet an information society is not necessarily a knowledgeable society, as information is not knowledge. This is what one must always remember while considering the new social form and the prospects that it creates for humankind.

The next section, entitled *Europe – Conscience – Democracy*, comprises two lectures given by Rocco Buttiglione, the present Minister of Culture of the Italian Republic, during his visit to Poland in January 2005. In October 2004 Rocco Buttiglione was the Italian candidate for the European Union's new commissioner for Justice, Freedom and Security. However, his candidacy was disapproved by the European Parliament due to his religious convictions, which he openly presented during the hearing. Buttiglione is known to have said: "The only thing I cannot do is to change my principles against my conscience for political convenience." In the lectures delivered in Cracow and in Lublin he spoke about the meaning of democracy in the modern world and of abuse of democracy under the heading of liberalism.

The section *Thinking about the Fatherland...* comprises the chapter on "The Vertical Dimension of European History" included in Pope John Paul II's book *Memory and Identity*.

The section *Letters* includes Zdzisław Najder's polemical letter on Wojciech Chudy's article "The Betrayal of the Solidarity," published in *Ethos* 17(2004) Nos. 67-68, as well as W. Chudy's reply.

In the section *Notes and Reviews* Piotr Ślęczka, SDS, reviews J. Habermas's *Przyszłość natury ludzkiej* [The Future of the Human Nature]; Piotr Mazur writes about the newest book by Francis Fukuyama *Koniec człowieka. Konsekwencje rewolucji biotechnologicznej* [*Our Posthuman Future: Consequences of the Biotechnology Revolution*]; Tomasz Garbol reflects on A. Gulisano's *Tolkien. Mit i łaska* [Tolkien: The Myth and the Grace]; Agnieszka Lekka-Kowalik presents a lengthy essay on *Computer Ethics and Professional Responsibility*, ed. by T. W. Bynum and S. Rogerson; Maksymilian Roszyk reviews A. Mattelart's *Spółeczeństwo informacji. Wprowadzenie* [The Information Society: An Introduction]; Mariola Kuszyk-Bytniewska presents a review of M. Castell's *Galaktyka Internetu. Refleksje nad Internetem, biznesem i społeczeństwem* [*The Internet Galaxy: Reflections on the Internet, Business and Society*]; Magdalena Lasik reflects on *Science and Technology Ethics*, ed. by R. E. Spier; and finally Waldemar Zaręba presents a review of *Podstawy nauk o religii* [The Foundations of Religious Studies] by A. Bronk, SVD. The section concludes with the *Proposals of the Ethos*.

The section of *Reports* includes Piotr Pawlak's report on the Seventh ETHICOMP International Conference on the Social and Ethical Impacts of Information and Communication Technologies, held at the University of the Aegean in Syros (Greece) in April 2004, as well as a report by Małgorzata Kitowska-Łysiak on the Lublin exhibitions initiatives in year 2004.

In the section *Through the Prism of the Ethos* Mirosława Chuda presents a feuilleton on the forms of extraverbal communication.

The volume concludes with the *Calendar* of the 26th and the 27th years of the pontificate of John Paul II (by Beata Bogusz), a *Bibliography* of John Paul II's addresses on the mass-media (by Tomasz Górka) and *Notes about the Authors*.

Summarized by *Dorota Chabrajska*